

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 7-11, 14, 15 and 17 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 8 and 15 are amended. Claims 6, 13 and 16 are canceled without prejudice to, or disclaimer of, the subject matter recited in those claims. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowability regarding claims 6 and 13. The amendments to claims 1, 8 and 15 are taken in light of this indication of allowability. Specifically, claim 1 is amended to include the indicated allowable subject matter of claim 6, claim 8 is amended to include the indicated allowable subject matter of claim 13, and claim 15 is amended in similar manner.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issue requiring further search and/or consideration as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution; and (c) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments and indications of allowability raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-4, 8-11, 15 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,734,991 to Schweid; rejects claims 7 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Schweid in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,333,064 to Seidner; and rejects claim 17 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Schweid.

Without conceding the interpretation, or application, of the applied references, and solely to advance prosecution of this application, the independent claims are amended to include the indicated allowable subject matter of now-canceled claims 6 and 13. The

amendments to claims 1, 8 and 15 obviate the rejections of those claims, and the claims depending therefrom.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-4, 7-11, 14, 15 and 17 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,


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